

## IN THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently amended) A pumping system, comprising:

a submersible, centrifugal pump having a first housing section, a second housing section, a unitary intermediate body to which the first housing section and the second housing section are threadably engaged, a shaft extending through the first housing section and the second housing section, a plurality of impellers and a plurality of diffusers located within the first housing section and within the second housing section, a first compression member and a second compression member positioned to independently compress the plurality of diffusers in the first housing section and in the second housing section such that the plurality of diffusers are independently preloaded in both the first housing section and the second housing section sufficiently to overcome cumulative pressure loads exerted by the plurality of impellers during operation wherein the unitary intermediate body absorbs compressive loading applied to a portion of the plurality of diffusers.

2. (Original) The pumping system as recited in claim 1, wherein the shaft is a single common shaft extending through the first housing section and the second housing section.
3. (Original) The pumping system as recited in claim 1, wherein the intermediate body comprises a central abutment from which a pair of threaded regions extend in opposite directions.
4. (Original) The pumping system as recited in claim 1, wherein the intermediate body comprises a plurality of flow passages.

5. (Currently amended) The pumping system as recited in claim 1, wherein the intermediate body comprises a central abutment and at least one seal on each side of the central abutment.
6. (Original) The pumping system as recited in claim 1, further comprising a submersible motor to drive the submersible, centrifugal pump, and a motor protector coupled to the submersible motor.
7. (Currently amended) A method of assembling a pump having a plurality of stages, comprising:
  - assembling a first plurality of stages in a first housing;
  - attaching an intermediate body to the first housing;
  - compressing the first plurality of stages within the first housing to establish a preload sufficient to overcome cumulative pressure loads exerted by the plurality of impellers during operation;
  - connecting a second housing to the intermediate body; and
  - compressing a second plurality of stages within the second housing to establish the preload.
8. (Original) The method as recited in claim 7, wherein compressing the second plurality of stages comprises compressing the second plurality of stages with a head member.
9. (Original) The method as recited in claim 7, wherein compressing the first plurality of stages comprises compressing the first plurality of stages with a compression member.

10. (Original) The method as recited in claim 7, wherein attaching comprises threading the intermediate body onto the first housing.
11. (Original) The method as recited in claim 10, wherein connecting comprises threading the second housing onto the intermediate body.
12. (Original) The method as recited in claim 7, wherein attaching comprises threading the intermediate body to a position at which a first plurality of diffusers is compressed.
13. (Original) The method as recited in claim 7, wherein compressing comprises compressing a second plurality of diffusers.
14. (Original) The method as recited in claim 7, further comprising installing a single, unitary shaft through the first plurality of stages and the second plurality of stages.
15. (Currently amended) A method of extending the potential length of a centrifugal pump, comprising:
  - assembling a single pump with multiple stages;
  - locating at least one intermediate body between groups of the multiple stages;
  - supporting the at least one intermediate body with an external housing; and
  - separately loading at least one group of the multiple stages on each side of the at least one intermediate body by compressing the at least one group with at least one compression member disposed on each side of the at least one intermediate body.
16. (Original) The method as recited in claim 15, wherein supporting comprises threading housing sections to the at least one intermediate body.

17. (Original) The method as recited in claim 15, wherein separately loading comprises loading a plurality of diffusers in each group of the multiple stages.
18. (Original) The method as recited in claim 15, wherein loading comprises first axially loading one group of stages within a first housing section via the intermediate body; then compressing another group of stages against an opposite side of the intermediate body and within a second housing section.
19. (Original) The method as recited in claim 15, wherein loading comprises applying a force against at least one group of the multiple stages with a compression member.
20. (Original) The method as recited in claim 19, wherein applying comprises applying the force with a compression tube.
21. (Original) The method as recited in claim 19, wherein applying comprises applying the force with a threaded compression ring.
22. (Currently amended) A system for assembling a pump, comprising:
- means for assembling a single submersible pumping system pump by alternately stacking diffusers and impellers on a shaft that may be coupled into a submersible pumping system; and
- means for locking each impeller to the shaft; and
- means for pulling the shaft to draw each impeller toward an adjacent diffuser before stacking a next sequential diffuser and impeller on the shaft ~~compressing groups of stages separately within the single pump.~~
23. (Original) The system as recited in claim 22, wherein the means for assembling comprises an outer housing.

24. (Currently amended) The system as recited in claim 22, wherein the means for assembling ~~compressing~~ comprises an intermediate body.
25. (Original) A method of increasing the potential length of a multistage pump in which each stage has an impeller and a diffuser, comprising:
- a. alternately stacking a diffuser and an impeller over the shaft;
  - b. locking the impeller to the shaft;
  - c. pulling the shaft to draw the impeller towards the diffuser; and
  - d. repeating steps a., b. and c.
26. (Original) The method as recited in claim 25, wherein repeating comprises repeating steps a., b. and c. for each stage of the pump.
27. (Original) The method as recited in claim 26, further comprising compressing the diffusers.
28. (Original) The method as recited in claim 25, further comprising varying a distance the shaft is pulled for different stages.
29. (Original) The method as recited in claim 25, wherein pulling comprises lifting the shaft.
30. (Original) The method as recited in claim 25, wherein alternately stacking comprises alternately stacking a single diffuser and a single impeller over the shaft.